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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KIKWETE TOUR D'HORIZON WITH CDA PART I:
REGIONAL ISSUES

Classified By: P/E Chief Carl B. Fox for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During a February 11 meeting with President Kikwete, CDA sought his views on Zimbabwe and dealing with the new AU Chair. Kikwete encouraged the U.S. to support the new Zimbabwe government. He said he had advised Morgan Tsvangirai to join the government and now would not abandon him. Kikwete said President Mugabe seemed tired, but his rhetoric against Tanzania had diminished. On the AU, Kikwete offered to help relay messages to Libyan President Qadhafi and expressed optimism that Qadhafi's capacity to embarrass would be limited. Unprompted, Kikwete told of his efforts within the AU to hold to a principled position in opposition to coups and other governments not elected democratically, which he said had been well received. Discussions at the meeting on U.S.-Tanzania issues will be reported septel. END SUMMARY.

Zimbabwe: New government will need support

¶2. (C) Kikwete said that at the recent SADC meeting, he and Botswana President Khama, who had been outspoken in support of Tsvangirai, both advised him to go into government. Kikwete told Tsvangirai privately that the Zimbabwean people would otherwise see MDC refusing to take a role in government while the country deteriorated. He told Tsvangirai time was on his side; by taking part in the government, he would be well positioned to prepare for the next election.

¶3. (C) Of Tsvangirai's efforts at the last SADC meeting to get additional ministries (Local Government, Media, and Agriculture), Kikwete said the proposal was rejected as having been settled in November. In any case, Kikwete said he advised Tsvangirai it was better to take fewer ministries and perform well. With too many ministries, especially in such dire economic circumstances, the risk of failure increased.

¶4. (C) Kikwete expressed concern over the proposed sharing of the Ministry of Home Affairs between ZANU-PF and MDC, saying that President Nyerere had tried something similar once but it had caused a big internal fight. He said the original proposal to rotate ministers at Home Affairs had foundered when the two sides could not agree who would start. Kikwete said he had doubts over Mugabe having control over the police.

¶5. (C) Kikwete said Mugabe appeared really tired at the SADC meeting. Mugabe hardly spoke, remaining silent on discussions of the Central Bank Governor and Attorney General. Mugabe insisted on his constitutional prerogative as President to name governors, but Kikwete advised him to consider the circumstances of the power sharing agreement. According to Zimbabwe's constitution, the president appoints all ministers, but those appointments had been designated in the agreement. Moreover, Kikwete pointed out that the governors are political, not just civil servants, especially because they all have seats in the Senate. Kikwete said

Mugabe did not reply during the SADC meeting. However, at the AU Summit Mugabe was more conciliatory and expressed thanks to Kikwete. Kikwete commented on the change from when Mugabe had been calling Tanzania a "puppet" of the U.S. and UK.

¶6. (C) Kikwete said the new government would need help, especially as it addresses the humanitarian crisis, and hoped the U.S. would encourage Tsvangirai and Mugabe to work together. CDA said he would convey the message. Kikwete said he would not abandon Tsvangirai after arguing for so long on his behalf. Kikwete said that support had come at a significant cost for Tanzania, but relations were now being patched up.

African Union: On Qadhafi as Chair

¶7. (C) CDA sought Kikwete's advice on dealing with the new AU Chair. Kikwete offered to continue being useful, since he would remain on the Bureau as Rapporteur through 2009. Kikwete said that he still had Qadhafi's confidence, despite Kikwete's "sabotage" of the idea of an AU Government. He suggested that the U.S. could pass messages through him to Qadhafi. Kikwete also relayed a comment of Ugandan President Museveni, that if Qadhafi wanted to represent the AU at the G20, "he should have company," perhaps the outgoing Chair. Within Qadhafi's government, Kikwete said that while the Minister for African Affairs, Dr. Treki, is a reasonable man, the Foreign Minister is a better choice for getting messages to Qadhafi.

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¶8. (C) Kikwete, saying "the Leader has his own world," often a world of "fantasy," described Qadhafi as an idealist whose ideas are incomprehensible to many. Kikwete cited the example of Qadhafi's proposal that the Israelis and Palestinians should live together at peace in a single nation: Israelitein. He said Qadhafi raised the idea, then quickly banged the table and proclaimed "So decided!" prompting a commotion in the hall. Kikwete added that by the time of Qadhafi's summation the following day, he had come to terms with reality and took a more compromising position. On Qadhafi's efforts to bring traditional rulers into the AU, Kikwete said that while he still had the chair he would not permit the traditional rulers to speak, since they were represented by their individual Heads of State and Government. He added that Malawian President Mutharika tweaked Qadhafi by referring to his own rise to power in 1969, when he displaced a "traditional ruler." Kikwete concluded by saying that while Qadhafi "has the capacity for creating some embarrassment," there are only two AU summit meetings during his chairmanship.

Other AU Matters: Holding Firm Against Coups

¶9. (C) Kikwete said that coups had been a big problem at the Addis summit. Saying "we should be principled," Kikwete noted proudly that his statement that there were "no good coups" earned him a standing ovation in Addis. Kikwete reviewed the AU's history with coups since the 2000 Lome Summit, citing Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, and Madagascar as earlier instances where the AU had suspended members (despite, in the case of Cote d'Ivoire, France's lobbying that it was a "good coup"). Kikwete said that he met with the Guinean delegation in Addis and told them that the coup was "not acceptable." He told the delegation that Guinea must return to democratic governance as soon as possible, after which "we'll be friends," and welcomed the promise to hold elections during 2009. CDA commented on the positive effects of the AU's position effect on the junta, which must be held to its promise on elections.

¶10. (C) Kikwete said he liked to cite his own example as a

soldier who had retired from military life before entering politics. He objected to the idea that the "officers' mess" would decide the distribution of ministries in a government. Kikwete cited an exchange he had with Senegalese President Wade, who had argued that the AU should work with the junta in Guinea. Kikwete said he asked Wade what should happen if the military in Dakar overthrew him: would he want the AU to accept it? Wade did not respond.

ANDRE